

EARLY ENGLISH CHRONICLE AND BIOGRAPHICAL
ANTECEDENTS OF I HENRY VI

BY

EARL HERMAN PETERSON

A.B., University of Colorado, 1923
A.M., State College of Washington, 1928

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH IN THE
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY
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With the notable exceptions of J. A. R. Marriott, Beverley Warner, and Henry Reed, most of the scholars who have studied the history and sources of the *I Henry VI* have limited their investigations to matters of historical accuracy and proximate sources. Marriott, Warner, and Reed are concerned with Shakespeare's dramatic imagination as related to historical material or to the value of the historical plays as patriotic documents. From Nicholas Rowe to the most modern editor of the play no one has attempted to study the characters and events of the *I Henry VI* as found in the earliest chronicle and biographical records and to present and explain systematically the successive changes in the presentation of these events and characters from the beginning to their incorporation in the play. Similar studies of the antecedents and traditions of *other* Shakespearean plays have been made. In 1900 G. B. Churchill published *Richard the Third up to Shakespeare*, and six years later Karl Schmidt published his dissertation *Margareta von Anjou vor und bei Shakespeare*. Following the method of Churchill and Schmidt, it is the purpose of this study first to examine the characters and events of the *I Henry VI* as they were interpreted in the English chronicle and biographical records of their own time and then to present systematically the subsequent changes in interpretation as recorded in English historical documents up to and including the *Anglica Historia* of Polydore Vergil. I have chosen to end with the work of Polydore Vergil because from the point of view of *method* he is believed by many scholars to be the first modern historian and because he represents the official and therefore the Tudor attitude toward the tradition which was transmitted without radical change by Hall, Grafton, Stowe, and Holinshed to the author of the *I Henry VI*. It is not the purpose of this study to discuss the unsettled problem of the authorship of the play, and consequently, the words "author," "dramatist," and "play-

wright" are merely convenient terms to indicate the writer or writers of the play as it appeared in the folio of 1623.

Virtually all studies and comments upon the sources of the play are concerned with the direct indebtedness of the playwright. This attitude is found in the editors of the play from Nicholas Rowe in 1709 to George Lyman Kittredge in 1936. All of the significant biographers of Shakespeare agree that the Dramatist was chiefly indebted to Holinshed, as do the authors of all books concerned exclusively with the study of sources, from the work of the "Female Quixote" in 1754 to Karl Otto Braun's *Die Szenenführung in den Shakespeare'schen Historien, Ein Vergleich mit Holinshed und Hall* in 1935. A single noteworthy exception is W. G. Boswell-Stone, whose *Shakespeare's Holinshed* appeared in 1896. Contemporary studies are concerned chiefly with the question of whether the Dramatist was at all indebted to the 1577 edition of Holinshed and whether there is any direct indebtedness to Edward Hall. By far the most penetrating and thorough study of the fifteenth-century historical literature as history has been made by the late Professor Charles L. Kingsford, who in 1905 published the *Chronicles of London* and in 1913 *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century*. The historical tradition incorporated in the *I Henry VI* has received little study except to determine the points of junction with the play.

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The action of *I Henry VI* occurs during the last thirty years of the Hundred Years War, that period between November 7, 1422, when Henry V was interred in Westminster Abbey, and July 18, 1453, when the body of John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, was recovered by his herald the day after Talbot's defeat at Castillon. It is that period between the height of British successes in France and the time of their final expulsion from the continent.

Upon the death of Henry V in 1422, the throne passed to Henry VI, an infant whose birth had been hailed by the pessimistic father with the gloomy prophecy, "I, Henry, born at Monmouth, shall small time reign and get much; and Henry, born at

Windsor, shall long reign and lose all; but God's will be done." During the infancy of the king, the regency of England was placed in the hands of the late King's next brother, Humphrey of Gloucester, an impulsive and tactless politician and scholar, who wooed the rising merchants of London and captured their support. The great nobles under the leadership of Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester and uncle of Gloucester, gave Gloucester the vague title of Protector and proceeded to govern England themselves. The regency of France was given to John, Duke of Bedford, brother of Gloucester and the most capable leader in England.

In 1425, while Bedford was in France, only the vigorous mediation of other members of the royal family prevented a violent clash between the forces of Gloucester and those of Winchester when Winchester prevented Gloucester from entering the Tower. Bedford hurried home to settle the domestic conflagration in open parliament. Gloucester preferred several charges against Winchester including those of having plotted the murder of the late King Henry V and of planning to seize the young king in order to rule England. With Bedford as mediator the rivals were forced to accept a hollow reconciliation with a slight advantage to Gloucester. To preserve a balance, Winchester, who had been removed as chancellor, shortly after was made a cardinal at Calais.

At this same Parliament, Richard of York, a descendant of Edward III from his third and fifth sons, Clarence and Edmund, was knighted, and, some say, given the title of Duke of York, a title which had been taken from his father because of treason. Since Henry VI was a descendant of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster and *fourth* son of Edward III, and since York was a descendant of both the third and fifth sons of Edward, York believed he had a better claim to the throne than the Lancastrian Henry VI and immediately became a potential threat to Lancastrian security.

Winchester, old and full of years, prepared his nephews, the Somersets, and the Earl of Suffolk to succeed him in royal favor and national power. Gloucester, enemy of Winchester, inclined

to favor York and his advancement. Only the cessation of the war in France was necessary to set the younger rivals at each others' throats at home.

In France the young Dauphin Charles VII under the inspiration of the peasant Joan of Arc raised the siege of Orleans in 1428, and not long after, inflicted a severe defeat upon the English at Patay. Lord Talbot was captured along with many other British noblemen. Success followed success to the French, and on July 16, 1429, Joan saw her king crowned in the cathedral at Rheims. A year later, the victim of ingratitude and probable treachery, she was captured by the Burgundian allies of the English, who turned her over to Bedford for trial. Tried before a biased ecclesiastical tribunal she was condemned as a relapsed heretic and burnt at the stake in 1431.

By 1435 the English losses had become so great that Burgundy tired of his English alliance, and, following an unsuccessful conference between the French and English at Arras, forsook the English and joined the French at a great price. The shock of the disaster killed Bedford, and the English continued to lose more ground in France. Hoping by diplomacy to gain some kind of victory, Suffolk with the approval of Winchester, secured a truce, upon the condition that Henry VI would marry Margaret of Anjou, a close relative of the Dauphin, without a dowry and would renounce all claims to the provinces of Maine and Anjou. In 1445 Henry and Margaret were married, and when the conditions were made known, the English people were incensed at Suffolk.

Gloucester, because of a treasonable plot by his wife, Eleanor Cobham, was out of favor at court, and consequently Winchester, Suffolk, the Somersets, and Margaret completely dominated the effeminate king. Fearing that the commons might rally round Gloucester and York, Suffolk and his party arrested Gloucester at Bury in 1447, and a few days later showed his dead body to the people, murdered, said his friends, by jealous nobles. A few months later Winchester died, and the stage was set for the struggle between the Yorkists under Richard of York, and the Lancastrians led by Suffolk and the Somersets.

In 1450, possibly abetted by the Duke of York, Jack Cade, a commoner, led an unsuccessful rebellion of the commons against the government, and during the same year, Suffolk, who had been blamed for the loss of Maine and Anjou and who had been held responsible for Gloucester's death, was murdered as he was leaving for France.

On the continent conditions grew steadily worse for the English. In the north only a small district around Calais remained in their possession, and all of southern France had fallen. The Bourdelais, who had preferred English rule, succeeded in persuading the English to send a liberating army in 1452. For a time the English under Talbot were successful, but by 1453 Charles of France had equipped a goodly army and met the English force at Castillon. Greatly outnumbered and unequal in equipment, on July 17, 1453, the English were badly defeated; Talbot, with his son, was killed; and with his death, "perished the last hope of English dominion in France."

iii

At several points in the play there are references to significant events in the life of Henry V, some of them connected with his son, Henry VI. For example, the Duke of Exeter quotes a version of Henry the Fifth's famous prophecy upon receiving the news that a son had been born at Windsor,—the prophecy,

That Henry born at Monmouth should win all,
And Henry born at Windsor should lose all.

The events of the first scene of the play occur at the funeral services for Henry V at Westminster Abbey. Included also are a eulogy and references to his directions for the government of England and of France, and for the rearing of his son. He is extolled as a superhuman conqueror divinely led, and a defender of the Church. When messengers bring news of serious reverses to the English arms in France, Exeter, great-uncle to Henry VI, reminds the nobles of their oath to crush the Dauphin or force his submission. Then, considering his own duty, Exeter decides to go to the young king, since by Henry V he had been made his special governor.

Two of the most important chronicle and biographical records of these incidents are the fifteenth-century biographies of Henry V and the writings of the monastic chroniclers. The influential biographies of Henry V are Capgrave's *Liber de Illustribus Henricis* (c. 1444), the *Vita Henrici Quinti* of Titus Livius (1437-1438), the *Vita et Gesta Henrici Quinti* (1446-1447), and *The First English Life of Henry V* (1513). The important monastic chronicles are the *Historia Anglicana* of Walsingham (1422), *The Southern Chronicle* (c. 1423-1426), *The Northern Chronicle* (1430), and *The Chronicle of John Strecche* (post 1422). Of these, only the *Vita et Gesta Henrici Quinti* of the Pseudo-Elmham and the *Historia Anglicana* can properly be called the earliest extant sources of events incorporated in the play, but that they have done more than establish or perpetuate a tradition is very uncertain.

Thomas Walsingham, one of the last monastic chroniclers of England, became during the last years of Edward III a monk at St. Albans. With the exception of a period between 1394 and 1400 he probably remained there copying and writing until his death about 1422. He is most widely known as the author of the *Historia Anglicana*, an influential history of England from 1272 to 1422. It is important to this study in that the record of the last hours of Henry V and the account of his funeral and interment in Westminster Abbey are the earliest surviving chronicle antecedents of the setting of the first scene of the *I Henry VI* and of the following lines in the play: I, i, 37; I, i, 84; and I, i, 171.

The *Vita et Gesta Henrici Quinti* is an important Latin biography of Henry V written about 1446 or 1447 and incorrectly attributed to Thomas Elmham by Thomas Hearne, who first edited the manuscript in 1727. Since modern scholarship has found little evidence to support the belief in Elmham's authorship, for convenience the unknown author has been called the "Pseudo-Elmham." The information given by the Pseudo-Elmham is not original. In fact, he says that he purposes to turn the "bald draft" of Titus Livius' *Vita Henrici Quinti* "into a shapely picture." Since much information concerning the last

days of Henry V has been added from other sources, it is believed that the Pseudo-Elmham might be indebted to Walter Hungerford, whom he addressed in the preface to the All Souls manuscript and who was present at the death of Henry V in 1422, or the Burgundian Monstrelet. As an antecedent of the *I Henry VI*, the *Vita et Gesta* is important as the earliest surviving English biographical record that the dying Henry V admonished his lords not to make peace with the Dauphin (See I, i, 162-164) and that after his death his body was encased in lead and placed in a coffin (See I, i, 19, and I, i, 64).

It must be understood that the conclusions given above are at best only strong probabilities, for positive identification of the ultimate sources of the passages given is virtually impossible because of the very nature of the facts themselves. This is especially true concerning sources of statements that Gloucester, Bedford, and Exeter had been appointed to their high offices and concerning the preparation of the body of the King for burial. Probably the most important conclusion to be drawn from a careful study of the early English biographies of Henry V and the writings of the monastic chroniclers is that very little of their factual information has been incorporated in *I Henry VI*.

iv

One of the most important and valuable sources of information concerning the reign of Henry VI (1422-1461) is the English town chronicles. They are valuable not only as records of contemporary events and opinions but also as sources of material used by later writers. Begun in 1189 with the reign of Richard I, they first recorded by mayoral years only the names of the mayors and the sheriffs. Gradually the chroniclers added brief notices of impressive political, social, or religious events and even trivia,—all within the mayoral year. By the beginning of the fifteenth century the recording of events had become as important as listing the names of the city officials. At no time, however, were the town chronicles much more than a list of events within the frame of the mayoral year. The chroniclers, probably of the middle class and interested chiefly in civic af-

fairs, almost never interpreted the events which they recorded, although occasionally their bias is unmistakable. For example, the London chroniclers are as a group clearly opposed to the rich Bishop of Winchester and in sympathy with Humphrey of Gloucester, who assiduously cultivated the London citizens.

C. L. Kingsford, who up to the present has made the most thorough study of the London chronicles as historical documents, finds that down to 1414 the chronicles belong to one version. To that version continuations were added in 1430, 1431, 1432, 1440, 1445, 1446, and 1485.

The following is a list of London chronicles classified according to versions. The date following each chronicle is that at which the chronicle ends, and does not necessarily imply that the work was written or even originally ended at that date.

Title	Date
I Version of 1430	
1. <i>The Great Chronicle</i>	1440, 1496
2. <i>MS. Harley 3775</i>	1429
3. <i>MS. Harley 565</i>	1443
4. <i>MS. Eshton Hall</i>	1440, 1565
II Version of 1431	
1. <i>MS. 57, St. John's College, Oxford</i>	1432
2. <i>MS. Vitellius F ix</i>	1439
3. <i>MS. Julius B i</i>	1483
III Version of 1432	
1. <i>MS. Julius B ii</i>	1435
2. <i>MS. Longleat</i>	1432
3. <i>MS. Cleopatra C iv</i>	1443
4. <i>MS. Arundel 19</i>	1432, 1452
IV Version of 1440	
1. <i>The Great Chronicle</i>	1440, 1496
2. <i>Gregory's Chronicle</i>	1470
3. <i>Vitellius A xvi</i>	1440, 1496
4. <i>MS. Rawlinson B 355</i>	1459
5. <i>Robert Bale's Chronicle (MS. E. 5, 9.)</i>	1461
6. <i>MS. Harley 540</i>	1447
V Version of 1446	
1. <i>Short English Chronicle (Lambeth MS. 306)</i>	1465
2. <i>MS. Gough London 10</i>	1470

VI <i>The Main City Chronicle</i>	1440, 1485
1. <i>The Great Chronicle</i>	1496
2. <i>Vitellius A xvi</i>	1496
3. <i>Fabyan's Chronicle</i>	1485, 1509

Of the London chronicles listed above the most important in the order of their influence are *The Great Chronicle*, the *MSS. Cleopatra C iv* and *Harley 565*, and *Fabyan's Chronicle*. *The Great Chronicle*, so named because it is the most comprehensive of the town chronicles, has contributed more to the *I Henry VI* than all of the other early antecedents combined. It is to *The Great Chronicle* that we must go for the earliest surviving antecedents of the following events and interpretation of character incorporated in the play.

1. Edmund Mortimer dies in the Tower, 1424 (?) - 1425 (?). II, v.
2. Richard Woodville, upon Winchester's orders, refuses to admit Gloucester to the Tower of London, October, 1425. I, ii, 1-56.
3. The commons of London shut up their shops to help Gloucester defend London against the Bishop of Winchester, October 30, 1425. III, i, 84-85.
4. The Mayor of London intervenes to stop the impending violence between Winchester and Gloucester, October 30, 1425. Indirectly related to I, iii, 57-92.
5. The Parliament at Leicester is called the Parliament of Bats because the commons came armed with clubs or "bats," February, 1426. III, i, 78-85.
6. At the Parliament at Leicester, Gloucester presents a written bill containing five formal articles of accusation against Winchester, February, 1426. III, i, S. d. 1-5.
7. In Parliament, 1426, Gloucester accuses Winchester of having planned to destroy him at London Bridge on October 30, 1425. III, i, 22-23.
8. In Parliament, Gloucester accuses Winchester of having proposed to remove the young King Henry VI from Eltham in order to control him, 1426. I, i, 175-177.
9. In Parliament, Gloucester accuses Winchester of having plotted the murder of Henry V, 1426. I, iii, 34.
10. In Parliament, Gloucester and Winchester shake hands and are formally reconciled for the time, 1426. III, i, 134-141.
11. Richard of York is created Duke of York at the Parliament at Leicester, 1426. III, i, 162-172.

12. The Duke of Exeter dies, December 27, 1426. Allusion in III, i, 199-200.
13. Winchester returns to London as Cardinal, autumn, 1428. V, i, 28-29.
14. Joan is believed to be a false witch by the English, but a prophetess and goddess by the French, 1430. I, ii, 144-145; I, ii, 150; I, iv, 102; I, vi, 8; I, vi, 29.
15. Henry VI is crowned in Paris, December 16, 1431. IV, i, 1-2.
16. Pothon de Xaintrailles is exchanged for Lord Talbot, 1433. I, iv, 27-29.
17. Bedford dies at Rouen in September, 1435, and is buried there. III, ii, 110-114; 131-133.
18. Paris is recovered by the French, 1436. V, ii, 2-3.
19. The Duchess of Gloucester is accused of plotting against the life of the King, 1441. I, i, 39-40. (Character allusion.)
20. The Earl of Suffolk opposes the Armagnac marriage and advocates the marriage of Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou, 1443. V, v.
21. The Earl of Suffolk negotiates the marriage of Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou upon the condition that England renounce all claim to Maine and Anjou, 1444. V, iii, 152-158.
22. Lord Talbot and his son are slain at Castillon, not Bordeaux, 1453, as in IV, vi.

To the *MSS. Harley 565* and *Cleopatra C iv* we owe the earliest surviving chronicle records of the following items.

1. The release of the Duke of Orleans in 1440, under conditions very much different from those given by the Dramatist in III, iii, 71-73.
2. Lord Talbot is made Earl of Shrewsbury, 1442. III, iv, 25-26.
3. An embassy from the Earl of Armagnac to Henry VI negotiates a marriage agreement between Henry VI and the Earl's daughter, 1442. V, i, 17-27.

Fabyan's Chronicle is the earliest English chronicle record of the following items found in the play.

1. Sir Francis the Arragonois in 1441 captured the castle of Corville by the ruse of having English soldiers dressed as French peddlers fall upon the unsuspecting gate-keeper and admit their comrades hidden near the entrance. In the play Joan captures the city of Rouen by a similar stratagem. III, ii, 1-18.

2. The Earl of Suffolk is commanded to levy a "fyftene & an halfe" for the expense of bringing Margaret to England, 1445. Compare with V, v, 92-93.

As might be expected, most of the detailed factual information contributed by the London chronicles concerns events occurring in England. This emphasis upon domestic news is readily understood when one realizes the social position of the writers and their inaccessibility to detailed official foreign information.

It should be noted, further, that besides being the greatest early chronicle contributor of factual information, *The Great Chronicle* is also the earliest surviving source of the favorable presentation of Gloucester, York, and Talbot and of the unfavorable presentation of Winchester, Somerset, and Suffolk,—interpretations which in spite of their obvious bias, became the accepted tradition later incorporated in the play.

Finally, it is significant for modern scholarship that the interests and prejudices of the London middle classes as reflected in the town chronicles have been followed in both the motivation of character and interpretation of events in the *I Henry VI*, even when such heightening for dramatic effect flatly contradicts the facts of history and invites Tudor wrath by presenting the Beauforts as a bastard house, and the House of Lancaster as inferior to the House of York.

v

Contemporary with the London chronicles and to some extent derived from them was another group of significant chronicles written in French and existing in two versions. According to Professor Friedrich W. D. Brie, the longer of the two, which extends to 1433, was probably written by William Pakington, Treasurer to Edward the Black Prince. About the year 1400 it was translated into English with a continuation to 1377. In 1906 Professor Brie published *The Brut or the Chronicles of England*, containing an English translation of the French *Brut d'Engleterre* and a number of the English continuations. The following is a list in chronological order of the few English continuations which have been published. With the exception of *Davies' Chronicle*, which has been published by the Camden

Society, the continuations have been edited by Professor Brie for his edition of *The Brut*. The dates in parentheses indicate the sections of the continuations which have been printed.

	Version	Date of MS.
1. MS. Cotton. Galba E viii (1418-1430)	1430	1431
2. MS. Univ. Lib. Cambridge Hh. 6. 9. (1420-28)	1430	1435
3. MS. Egerton 650 (1419-1430)	1430	1430
4. MS. Rawlinson B 173 (1422-1431)	1431	1431
5. MS. Harley 53 (1066-1436)	1436	1437
6. MS. Trin. Coll. Camb. 09.1 (1430-1446)	1446	1446
7. Davies' Chronicle (1377-1461)	1437, 1461	c. 1461-2
8. Caxton's Chronicles (1419-1461)	1430, 1440	c. 1464
9. MS. Lambeth 84 (1421-1475)	1475	c. 1479

Despite the tendency in some quarters to praise the *Brut* as an important historical document, so far as its relation to this study is concerned it is merely a poor debtor to the London chronicles. The writers of the *Brut* have borrowed much, but have initiated virtually nothing. Only one influential item, Caxton's statement that Joan feigned pregnancy to postpone execution, appears to be original, and credit for that is somewhat doubtful since Caxton, along with Fabyan and *The Great Chronicle*, is believed to be indebted to the non-extant *Main City Chronicle* for a great part of the information contained in his chronicle after 1440. Another item, of no influence whatever, is unique. The *Galba E viii* says that Salisbury was killed, not by a French gunner's son, as in Hall, Grafton, Holinshed, and the play, but by "a fals thef, a traitour withynne the toune."

Even the interpretations of character and the biases of *Brut* chroniclers are the same as those of the town chronicles. *Davies' Chronicle* and *Caxton's Chronicles* clearly sympathize with Gloucester and York and oppose Winchester, the Somersets, and Suffolk. Generally speaking, the *Brut* chronicles are singularly disappointing as ultimate and influential sources of traditions incorporated in *I Henry VI*. Their only significance is that of continuators of a tradition initiated by the chronicles of London.

So popular were the *Brut* chronicles and their continuations that a few were translated into Latin for the convenience of those to whom the Latin literary tradition still appealed. It seems to be a common characteristic that they should end with the death of James I of Scotland in 1437. Further, all are anonymous, and most of these seem to be but a meager abridgment of the English original. The content is so thin as to be little more than brief notes. Much important information is omitted and nothing new is added. Scant attention is given to interpretation of character unless it be to praise Gloucester and denounce Suffolk. Winchester, for all his participation in the affairs of state, is neither praised nor blamed. The most that can be said of the Latin *Brut* is that, even more than the English *Brut*, it is a weak vessel bearing a small cargo of secondhand conventional attitudes.

vi

In addition to the chronicles and biographies discussed above, there were produced in the fifteenth century a number of other chronicles and biographies which are of secondary importance because they contain little new or original material and are, for the most part, compilations of preceding records. A few are only private records written with no view to circulation, and, consequently, they have had no part in the development of a tradition. They must be noticed, however, because they discuss events or characters later incorporated in the *I Henry VI*. Some are complete units, and some are mere fragments. Some cover short periods; others cover centuries. Some are in Latin, and others are in English. One, *The Chronicle of John Hardyng*, is written in wretched verse. Most of them were written before 1470. The following is a list of the chronicles and biographies discussed in this chapter with the approximate dates of their composition.

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Anonymous. <i>Chronicon Rerum Gestarum in Monasterio Sancti Albani</i> | c. 1431 |
| 2. John Capgrave. <i>Liber de Illustribus Henricis</i> | c. 1444 |
| 3. John Blacman. <i>Life of Henry Sixth</i> | ante 1470 |
| 4. Anonymous. <i>Waltham Annals</i> | c. 1447 |

5. Anonymous. *Gloucester Annals* c. 1470
6. Thomas Gascoigne. *Loci e Libro Veritatum* c. 1458
7. Anonymous. *Incerti Scriptoris Chronicon Angliae* c. 1460
8. Anonymous. *Brief Notes from MS. Lambeth 448* c. 1462
9. John Hardyng. *The Chronicle of John Hardyng* c. 1464
10. William Worcester. *Annales Rerum Anglicarum* c. 1470
11. Anonymous. *The Second Continuation of the History of Croyland* c. 1470

One of the few surviving monastic chronicles of the fifteenth century, the *Chronicon Rerum Gestarum*, was, in all probability, compiled by a monastic annalist of St. Albans, who was apparently unconcerned with foreign affairs and with very little not directly connected with St. Albans. At only a few points is it related to the subject of this study. The reception accorded Winchester upon his return from the continent as cardinal in 1427 is described in greater detail than in any other contemporary account. There is no doubt that Winchester is a most admirable person in the mind of our annalist. At no point is he the haughty, unscrupulous politician of the sixteenth-century chronicles and the play. On the other hand, Humphrey of Gloucester, the royal patron of St. Albans is given only perfunctory praise. Clearly the *Chronicon Rerum Gestarum* as an influential antecedent of *I Henry VI* is of no consequence whatever.

Two fifteenth-century accounts of Henry VI are John Capgrave's *Liber de Illustribus Henricis* (c. 1444) and John Blacman's *Henry VI* (*ante* 1470). Neither is, in the modern conception of the word, a biography, for neither is chiefly concerned with a narration and interpretation of the chief events in the life of its subject. Both accounts are little more than a glorification of Henry's pious virtues with examples of his good works. It can hardly be said that these writers have influenced the Dramatist's interpretation of Henry VI. To the biographers the King is not passively devout; he is aggressively devout and vigorously promotes the cause of Catholicism by example as well as by precept. The Henry VI of the play is little more than a passive puppet whose religious qualities are never mentioned.

The *Waltham Annals* (c. 1447) and the *Gloucester Annals* (c. 1470) have had no influence whatever on the play. The *Waltham Annals* records the succession of the infant Henry VI to the throne and his coronation at Paris in 1431. The *Gloucester Annals* does not mention one event embodied in the play.

The *Loci e Libro Veritatum* is really a collection of extracts from the *Dictionarium Theologicum* of Thomas Gascoigne. Very little of the book is related to the subject of this study and none of it directly. We are interested chiefly in the vivid account of Suffolk's negotiations for the marriage of Henry VI to Margaret of Anjou and of the bitter denunciation of both Suffolk and the bride. Like other private and semi-private records of the time, it reflects the popular opinion, but it is definitely not a significant link in the tradition embodied in the play.

The *Incerti Scriptoris Chronicon Angliae* contains an anonymous *Chronicle of Henry VI*, said to be the most nearly complete Latin history of the reign. It is so full of inaccuracies that it is reliable only when supported by accepted authorities. The author is so much a cleric that he can never bring himself to criticize Winchester, and in his account of Gloucester's death the writer holds Suffolk entirely responsible. The chronicle differs so often from the events of the play that it cannot be called even remotely influential upon the drama.

In *Three Fifteenth Century Chronicles*, Professor Gairdner has published a selection from the *MS. Lambeth 448*, entitled "Brief Notes of Occurrences under Henry VI, and Edward IV." It consists mainly of single notes for each year, written as a more or less private record with no literary purpose or intention for a wider circulation. Since the information is meager and sometimes very inaccurate, it is unlikely that "Brief Notes" belongs in the line of chronicles which influenced the interpretation of character or the plot of *I Henry VI*.

Another chronicle, of doubtful accuracy in wretched verse but of unquestioned influence upon later chroniclers is *The Chronicle of John Hardyng*, written about 1464 by a time server first under the Lancastrian and then under the Yorkist kings. He does not hide his sympathy for Winchester and his opposi-

tion to Gloucester. The struggle between the two nobles at the Parliament with the temporary defeat of Winchester is not even recorded, nor is anything said of the siege of Orleans except that Salisbury was killed there. Joan and her activities are completely ignored. Continuing his unusual history, Hardyng praises Richard of York as an able administrator and denounces the murderers of Suffolk as "brigauntes." There is no account of the expulsion of the English from Normandy or of Talbot's defeat and death at Castillon. Whatever may have been the influence of Hardyng upon later chroniclers, it was nil concerning events and characters in the *I Henry VI*.

The *Annales Rerum Anglicarum* is a long but unimportant Latin chronicle written about 1470 by William of Worcester, an Oxford scholar and at one time secretary to Sir John Fastolf. The records are brief notes arranged according to Christian, not regnal years. The dates are often incorrect, the information is thin, and there is nothing new of significance. Lacking in detail and probably compiled for the use of one person or at least a small group, the *Annales* has had no influence upon later chroniclers. Neither Fabyan, Hall, nor Holinshed listed it as a source or apparently knew of its existence.

Although the stream of monastic chronicles was of no mean proportions in the thirteenth century, it narrowed considerably in the fourteenth, and in the fifteenth disappeared entirely. Among the last of these surviving chronicles is Ingulph's *Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland* with the continuations by Peter of Blois and anonymous writers. The authors give almost no information relevant to this study, and much of it is unreliable. There is not even a note concerning the death of Mortimer in 1424, the great struggle between Beaufort and Gloucester at Leicester in 1426, the elevation of Beaufort to the cardinalate in 1427, the disastrous campaign at Orleans in 1428, or the defection of Burgundy and the death of Bedford following the conference at Arras in 1435. Suffolk is "skilled in deceiving" and probably responsible for the death of that most illustrious prince, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. Winchester is called "illustrious above all the nobles of England, by his probity and wisdom, wealth

and renown." Generally speaking, it cannot be said that Ingulph's *Chronicle* has contributed anything to the *I Henry VI*.

As influences upon the tradition incorporated in the *I Henry VI*, the minor English chronicles and biographies to 1500 are of no consequence whatever. Later chroniclers were undoubtedly influenced by the *Chronicle of John Hardyng* but not for information later embodied in the *I Henry VI*.

vii

The interest of the fifteenth century in historical writing was transmitted with undiminished vigor to the sixteenth. *Fabyan's Chronicle*, though probably conceived and written in part during the last years of the fifteenth century, remained unprinted until 1516, three years after the author's death. So great was the interest of the sixteenth century in the *Chronicle* that it was reprinted in 1533, 1542, and 1559. Continuing in the same historical tradition were John Rastell's *The Pastyme of People*, 1529, and the *Anglica Historia* of Polydore Vergil, which followed in 1534. Along with this interest of the sixteenth century in historical writing there was developing also an active interest in English folk lore and antiquities. In 1502 there appeared one of the first of a considerable body of antiquarian books when Richard Arnold published *The Customs of London*, more widely known as *Arnold's Chronicle*.

As a book, *Arnold's Chronicle* has very little claim to the title of chronicle, for only a small part of it is a chronicle. The editors of the 1811 edition describe it as "an extraordinary medley of information, consisting of a list of Mayors and other officers, of charters, municipal regulations, assizes of bread, legal and mercantile forms and documents, family and other receipts, with some historical matters; the whole being adapted to the particular and more immediate use of the citizens of London."

The historical record, like that of the fifteenth-century London chronicles, begins at 1189 and is continued to the twenty-third year of Edward IV. There is no elaboration whatever. In fact the two outstanding qualities of the chronicle are such extreme condensation and serious misdating of events as to make

the record virtually worthless. Even the most superficial examination is sufficient to convince the reader that the annals of *The Customs of London* have had no influence upon the tradition embodied in the *I Henry VI*.

In addition to the worthless annals there are two other sections of *The Customs* which are of importance to this study. The first is Gloucester's articles of accusation against Winchester at the Parliament at Leicester in 1426, and the second, a list of the articles in Gloucester's complaint against Winchester in 1440. The former is given in a form virtually identical with that found in *The Great Chronicle*, and in this respect *The Customs of London* becomes a significant link in the chain of records between *The Great Chronicle* and the play.

In 1440 Winchester sought to procure the release of the Duke of Orleans, who had been an English prisoner for many years. Gloucester, remembering the admonition of Henry V never to release the Duke, denounced Winchester as a selfish, grasping ecclesiastic, whose unscrupulous ambition had led him to defraud his own sovereign. The first part of the "Complaynte," reads, "Furst, ye Cardynal, thoo beyng Bishop of Winchester, toke vpō him ye state of cardynal, which was naied and denayed hy by ye Kyg, off most noble memorye, my Lord your fadir whō God assoyle, sayng yt he had as leef sett his crowne besyde him as to see hi were a cardynal hatte, he beyng a cardinal; for he knew full wel the pryde and th' ambusyon that was in his parson, thoo beyng but a biship shulde haue soo gretly extolled him into more intollerable pride whan that he wer cardynal" This passage is, I believe, the earliest surviving chronicle record of *I Henry VI*, V, i, 31-33.

The Customs of London is of significance to this study upon two counts: (1) It re-presents a detailed and accurate list of Gloucester's charges against Winchester, together with a statement of the reconciliation, and in so doing becomes a link in the tradition between *The Great Chronicle* and the play; and (2) it is probably the earliest surviving chronicle source of *I Henry VI*, V, i, 31-33.

John Rastell's *The Pastyme of People* (1529) consists of "Cronycles . . . brevely cōpyled" from earlier town chronicles, and especially from Fabyan, whose *Chronicle* Rastell himself edited in 1533. At best it is only an abridgment, for within our period it omits much found in the sources and adds nothing. Like the annals of *The Customs of London*, it is significant only as a link in the chain of tradition from primary sources to the play.

One of the most valuable histories of England published during the first half of the sixteenth century is the *Anglica Historia* of Polydore Vergil. The first and the second editions, published in 1534 and 1546, carried the history down to 1509, and five more editions, published later in the century, continued the history to 1538.

The *Anglica Historia* is especially important to this study because the compilation from 1421 to 1453 received the approval of Tudor Henry VIII and thereby established the "core of Hall's narrative" and those of later Elizabethan historians, especially Holinshed. True it is that Holinshed and even Hall do not always adhere to the narrative of Polydore. For information concerning the operations of the English armies in France, they have frequently used the more reliable French chroniclers, but, by and large, it is the *Anglica Historia* of Polydore Vergil that has determined the tradition of Henry VI for Elizabethan England.

One deviation from the main stream of tradition is found in Polydore: his treatment of Cardinal Beaufort. According to Polydore, Beaufort was the "onely man by whose high wisdom and puissant wealth king Henry might have been so supported that, all feare sett aside, he might without doubt have continued in perpetuall peace at home." So marked is his unwillingness to criticize Beaufort that he omits all details of the quarrel between Gloucester and Beaufort at the Parliament at Leicester in 1426. The explanation for this attitude is to be found, I believe, in the fact that Polydore was a cleric and like most clerical chroniclers, was unwilling to paint a cardinal unfavorably before the world. Polydore was by no means op-

posed to Humphrey of Gloucester, whom he calls the chief stay of the commonwealth and whose "shamefull slaughter" caused good men to forsake the court.

The cause of this "shamefull slaughter" was the Earl of Suffolk, whose bad judgment was responsible for the loss of much English territory in France and for the marriage of Henry VI to Margaret of Anjou. Margaret, he says, was "endeued with a hault courage above the nature of her sexe, . . . very desirous of renowne, full of policie . . . but she was of the kind of other women, who commonly are much geuen and very readie to mutabilitie and chaunge." Further she was so closely attached to Suffolk that she "could not well spare him out of her sight." These descriptions of Margaret are, I believe, the earliest surviving chronicle sources of the *I Henry VI*, V, v, 70-71, and of Margaret and Suffolk as lovers.

It is to Polydore also that we must go for the earliest extant English account of the following other items in the play:

1. In France at the bedside of the dying Henry V, the nobles promise to carry out the King's commands concerning the administration of his kingdom. I, i, 162.
2. The French capture Le Mans and Lord Talbot recaptures the city under circumstances similar to those in the capture of Rouen and Orleans in the play. II, i.
3. The French in Orleans celebrate the raising of the siege as do the citizens of Orleans in the play. I, vi.
4. At Patay, 1429, the French defeat the British in a three-hour battle by attacking before the British can enrank their soldiers and provide stakes to set before their archers. I, i, 115-116.
5. Burgundy notifies Henry VI and the court of his reconciliation with the Dauphin, 1435. The English are furious. IV, i, 49-63.

It should be noted that most of these items are in some way related to France or to a continental character, — a fact which indicates the increasing influence of continental chroniclers upon the chronicles of England.

The early sixteenth-century chronicles have made a small but definite contribution to the tradition incorporated in the play. Arnold's *Customs of London* has contributed a point,

and Polydore Vergil has contributed so great a number as to place him second, though a poor second, to *The Great Chronicle* itself as a significant antecedent of the *I Henry VI*.

viii

A careful study of the early English chronicle and biographical records, 1422-1534, shows them to be the earliest extant antecedents of most of the events occurring in England and of character interpretation throughout the play. Clearly the most influential of these early antecedents is *The Great Chronicle* (1430-1440-1496), and next in order of influence are the *Anglica Historia* of Polydore Vergil, the *MSS. Cleopatra C iv* and *Harley 565*, *Fabyan's Chronicle*, the *Vita et Gesta Henrici Quinti* of Thomas Elmham, the *Customs of London*, and *Caxton's Chronicle*.

The few events of the last year of Henry V referred to in the play have as their earliest surviving chronicle and biographical sources the monastic *Historia Anglicana* of Walsingham and the *Vita et Gesta* of the Pseudo-Elmham.

It is a matter of no small significance that the preponderance of influence is due to the London chronicles of the fifteenth century. Even the unhistorical presentation of Margaret and Suffolk as lovers and the interpretation of Winchester as an ambitious mercenary priest are but the dramatic heightening of hints and suggestions found in the early chronicles. It is significant, too, that as the London chronicles definitely reflect the bias of their middle-class authors in favor of Gloucester and against Winchester, of the House of Beaufort, from which the Tudors were descended, it is this same middle-class prejudice which the Dramatist has perpetuated.

In spite of the historical fact that the Tudors emphasized their Lancastrian connection and suppressed their Yorkist and inferior Beaufort origins, the Dramatist has not hesitated to denounce the Beauforts as a bastard house, the Lancastrians as brilliant usurpers, and the House of York as superior in its descent from Edward III. Gloucester and Talbot are portrayed, not as ardent Lancastrians, but rather as *national* heroes, and Winchester, who

is the most distinguished member of the House of Beaufort, is made a crafty villain. On the other hand, Richard of York, head of the rival house, shares with Talbot and Gloucester the audience's favor.

Generally speaking, the *Brut* for the period of this study appears to be derived from the town chronicles and is, therefore, of little consequence as an ultimate source of incidents presented in the play. An important exception, however, is Caxton, who is the earliest surviving source of the statement that Joan feigned pregnancy to delay execution. The *Brut* is of importance to this study chiefly as a continuator, not an initiator, of tradition later embodied in the play.

The minor English chronicles and biographies of the fifteenth century are, for the most part, compilations of preceding records, and contain little or no original material bearing upon the subject of this study. A few are only private records not intended for circulation. Some, especially those written by ecclesiastics, reveal their monastic bias in their support of Winchester and open or implied condemnation of Gloucester. No minor chronicle contributed new material which was later incorporated in the *I Henry VI*.

It is to Fabyan and Polydore Vergil, chroniclers of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, that we must go for the first surviving chronicle records in England of important French incidents dramatized in the play. For this material Fabyan and Polydore acknowledge their indebtedness to continental chroniclers, some of them former enemies, whose work was becoming increasingly accessible as the period of peace was prolonged. The chief importance of these two chroniclers to this study is the addition of new foreign material and the establishment of a tradition concerning important characters and events of 1422-1453 which culminated in the *I Henry VI*.

As stated in the beginning, it is the purpose of this study, first, to examine the characters and events of the *I Henry VI* as they were interpreted in the English chronicle and biographical records of their own time and then to present systematically the subsequent changes in interpretation as recorded in later

English accounts up to and including the *Anglica Historia* of Polydore Vergil. It has been shown that the chief ultimate English source was the middle-class town chronicles of London and that those chronicles initiated an interpretation of events and characters which remained substantially unchanged up to the *I Henry VI*.

Much spadework remains to be done before the full influence of the English town chronicles upon Shakespearean drama can be determined. The solution of the problem is made especially difficult because there is every indication that many important chronicle manuscripts have been lost. This loss, added to the fact that succeeding chroniclers and copyists selected material from first one and then another source, makes the establishment of an incontrovertible line or chain of indebtedness almost impossible. Further, since the extant manuscripts exist in widely scattered places, and since only a few have been studied in detail, it is essential that a coordinated study and comparison of particular manuscripts be made. It is probable that if a chain of indebtedness is ever established, it will be an indebtedness of one chronicler to another for particular items, not an indebtedness for all the information given concerning a period. A collation of the editions of *Caxton's Chronicles* should be made if we are to understand the exact place of his work as an influence upon later writers. The snarl of mutual indebtedness between Stowe and Grafton remains as tangled as ever, and much of what we call an indebtedness of Shakespeare to Raphael Holinshed may, upon investigation, prove to be an indebtedness to William Patten, Abraham Fleming, John Hooker, or Francis Thynne. Only when these and related problems are solved, will it be possible to determine exactly the influence of the chronicles upon Shakespeare, and incidentally upon the *I Henry VI*.

VITA

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